

What an entrance. A Zaha Hadid sofa combines with eclectic artwork collection and a stunning water feature and overhead glass ceiling.

HOME OF THE YEAR 2009

# Open House

**Soha Nashaat and Javier Fernandez's** Palm Jumeirah Signature villa is a breezy retreat where rooms are made for mingling and where the emphasis is on the communal

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Sheers on the floor to ceiling windows create a sense of airiness as does the natural colour palette in this lounge area.



Soha has a love of Middle Eastern artwork sourced from ArtSpace, Dubai.



Not many newly married couples managed to combine their possessions so seamlessly. Here modern and traditional are juxtaposed



A view of the water wall which Javier wanted to create. The interior walls have been removed to create a feeling of flow



“”

met in the Maldives and it's my favourite place on earth. I wanted to recreate the same laid back feeling in this villa," says Javier as he points out one of his favourite things – a small model of Dhoni Mighili, the Per Aquum resort where he first met his wife Soha. "We both have a dhoni model to remind us of where we met and fell in love," says Javier smiling. Soha and Javier were married last year in Las Vegas and this is their first home together. It's a romantic start to a house story which has at its foundations the very essence of love. Javier, you see, bought the Palm Jumeriah Signature villa as a wedding present for Soha and while they took possession of it in February of this year, the house has been completely renovated in its entirety to bring their love of art, design and the outdoors to the forefront. Considering the time scale and what they have both achieved it's more than a little inspiring. Says Soha of the process, "We started with the idea of wanting to create an axis that ran from the front door to the beach; that is how we saw the house; walking in and getting the effect of open space and straight lines. We wanted a space that we could live and entertain in, one that flowed together without closed off rooms. I think our inspiration is the fact that we are two people who have travelled a lot. We simply brought together elements we liked from various destinations and mixed it all up."

She's right for this home is a cultural melting pot of accessories, artwork and one-off design pieces which betray the homeowners roots. Soha defines herself as 'Pan Arab' and Javier is Spanish. But that is only half the story. As Managing Director of Barclays Wealth, Soha's career has spanned three continents working in South America, the US and London and in the process she has picked up international awards for her acumen as a financier and business ▶



Mixing traditional antique furniture with contemporary artwork and a great light which changes colour, Soha and Javier combine family heirlooms and their taste with impeccable style

"TRAVELLING A LOT INSPIRES ME AND IT'S A PLEASURE TO FILL A HOME WITH THINGS YOU COLLECT OVER TIME"



This Sabhan Adam painting dominates the living area and is a favourite of Soha's



The Cedri/Martini fractalia chandelier sourced from a photo taken at Milan Furniture Fair



The upstairs lounge is a rich mix of copper tones and wood with separate work areas for both Javier and Soha

woman. Javier, meanwhile, is a pioneer in industrial waste management in Spain whose passion for sustainability at work is matched by his efforts at home. Check the fibre optic and LED lighting, the EcoSmart firetowers with bioethanol rather than fossil derived fuel. They're now discussing the addition of solar panels for residential use with a friend who is sourcing the applicable technology. Should they decide to change careers, interior design would seem to be a natural vocation.

Together their combined flair is in creating a refreshingly different home whose style Soha describes as 'contemporary eclectic.' One of the most striking things you notice is the stunning Zaha Hadid sofa which is situated in the entrance and on which the couple's four cats love to recline of an evening. While not many pets can claim to have such a design forward resting place, the sofa sets the tone for the design pieces which Soha has collected. "I love strong contrasts, you keep a neutral background and mix it up with a strong accent piece," is Soha's recipe for interior magic. First though she had to prepare the necessary backdrop. "The space needed a lot of visualization as it was quite boxy," says Soha, "the first step was to remove the standardization and try to create an open space around which we worked to pull the outside in." Thus the open plan downstairs space houses a dining area, majlis seating area, billiard table, bar and lounge area. Says Soha, "It was literally a piece of work which evolved daily. We did not have one design which we stuck to, we had the initial concept and then kept building on it. For example, as we ripped the place down our contractor Mathew discovered that we can knock the ceilings to create more height. We just kept working with what was unearthed during the renovation." They would have been lost without the expertise of Louis Wehbe their interior designer who helped to pull their ideas together in a cohesive whole. For his own part Louis has nothing but praise for his clients. "I've never met anyone like Soha; she's virtually an engineer. We didn't have to do any renderings for her to understand the concept. We both agreed on what was important - using lots of natural light and using a neutral colour scheme with accent features of shade, colour or illumination." One feature which Louis incorporated into an executable plan was Javier's desire for water walls and a glass floor overlooking these water features. On entering the villa you cross a water feature which is surrounded by water flowing and the eye is then drawn by the infinity pool outside and the Arabian Sea beyond. All the while the five senses are engaged in the process.

On the walls are a contemporary collection of Middle Eastern artists whom Soha has sourced, "We have collected pieces over time from all over the world but our Dubai home has a focus on Middle Eastern art which my sister in law, Maliha Tabbari, helped me build over the past few years through her gallery Artspace. My personal favourites are paintings by Sabhan Adam and Adel El Siwi." These are juxtaposed by the ultra modern Cedri/Martini Fractalia chandelier which hangs over the stairwell. This was sourced by Soha from a photo taken at Milan Furniture Fair. "I bought it thinking it was white, but it arrived pink. The good ▶

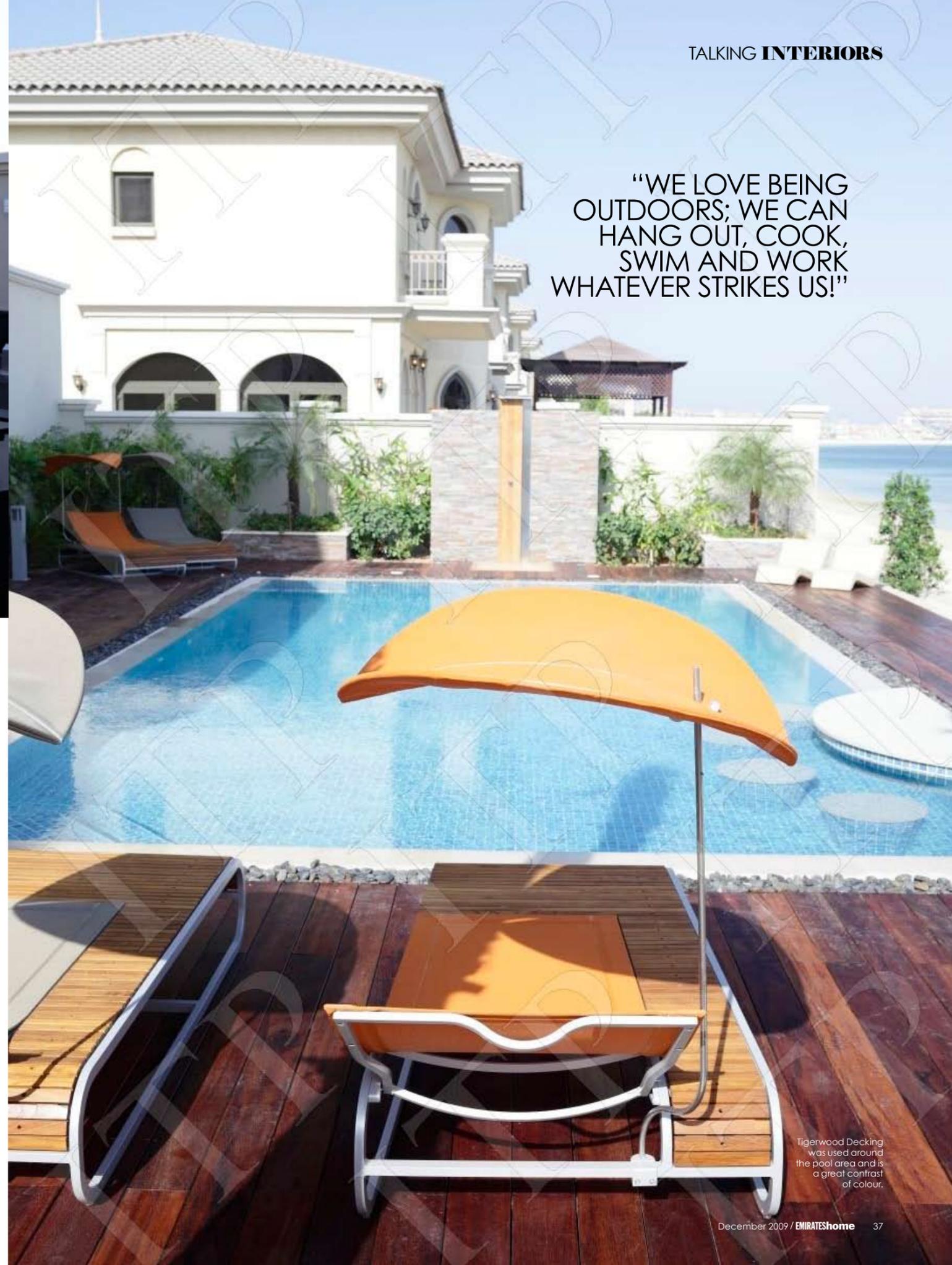


Soha and Javier with their Pug, Che

“WE LOVE BEING OUTDOORS; WE CAN HANG OUT, COOK, SWIM AND WORK WHATEVER STRIKES US!”



The outdoor and indoor kitchen is the core of the house. Here the quirky stools are complemented by the fabrics chosen in the majlis area



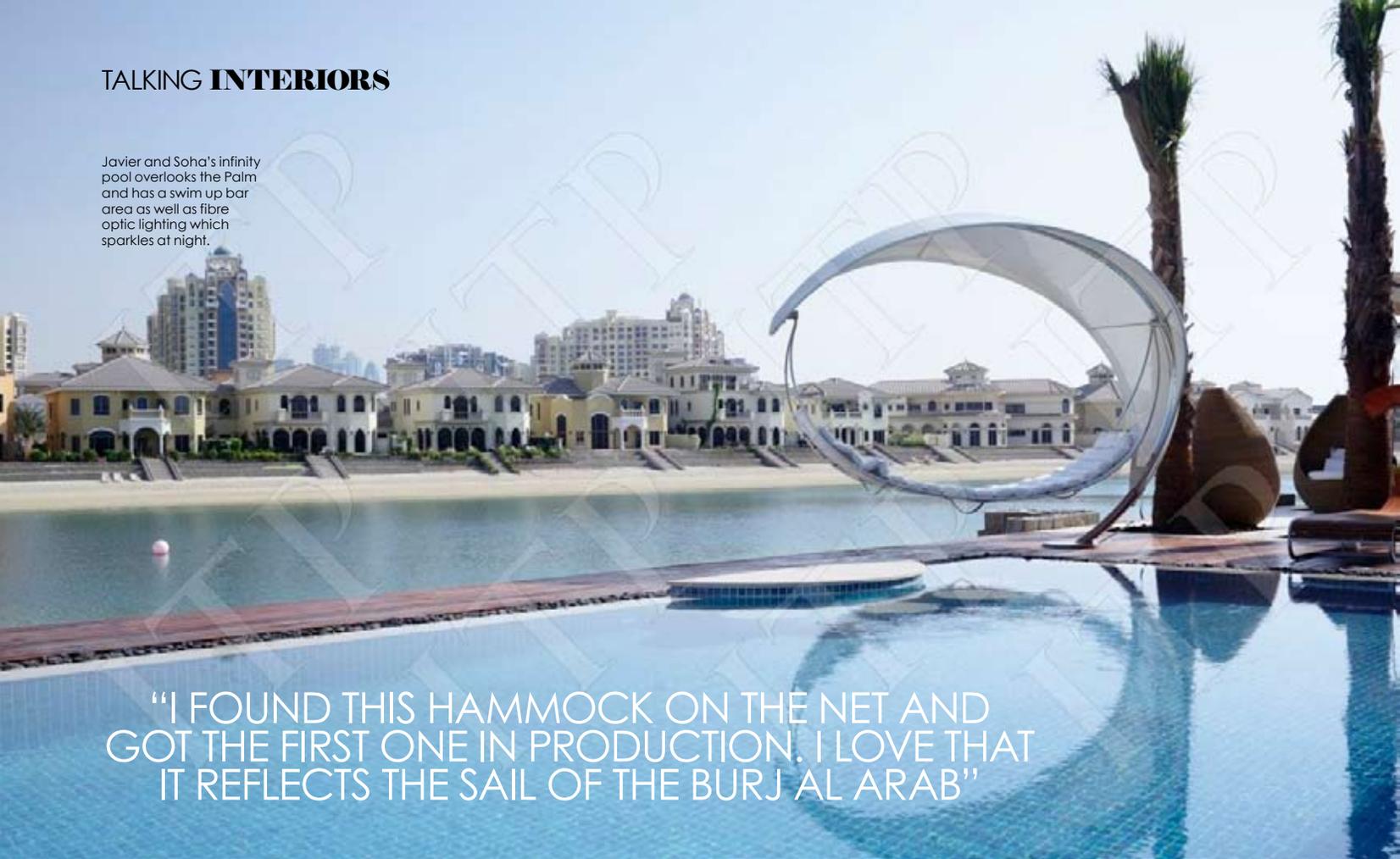
Symmetry is key to the garden and these pod chairs from US firm Jane Hamley Wells are a beautiful feature in themselves, while the stepping stones and black pebbles add a contemporary touch to the landscaping.



Diversity of seating makes this outdoor area a delight - stools, loungers, sofas and a hammock all combine to welcome visitors

Tigerwood Decking was used around the pool area and is a great contrast of colour.

Javier and Soha's infinity pool overlooks the Palm and has a swim up bar area as well as fibre optic lighting which sparkles at night.



“I FOUND THIS HAMMOCK ON THE NET AND GOT THE FIRST ONE IN PRODUCTION. I LOVE THAT IT REFLECTS THE SAIL OF THE BURJ AL ARAB”

news is that it worked extremely well so disaster was averted.”

What enhances the whole interior though is the choice of complementary fabrics and soft furnishings which reflect the natural surroundings of Dubai. Soha's love of natural colours was helped by a series of light reflecting fabrics and textures used throughout the house. Carla Sandral, an old friend and interior designer, helped her source the sheers, wallpapers and fabrics for the rooms. In the upstairs living area Soha kept to the copper colours used in the master bedroom and Carla found a Lelievre fabric in tan and pale silver in a loose Grecian key design that adds texture without being fussy. Outside Soha wanted it “bright and colourful” choosing a palette of rich pistachio, fuchsia and orange that she combined with Perennials fabrics (an idea that Lesley Zaal gave her) which maintain an elegant feel and work well with the Ego Paris furniture. Indeed the whole outdoor space has been designed around Soha's love of entertaining (she is a legendary hostess and cook) and she believes that her indoor Poggenpohl kitchen and outdoor kitchen (with Viking appliances) are the core for the house. Perhaps the most eye-catching element is the huge Royal Botania hammock which was the result of Soha “trawling the internet looking for design inspiration. I saw it when it was in concept stage and ordered it. I got the first one off the production line and now it sits in pole position with an enviable view of the Burj Al Arab” – Soha's favourite building.

If the indoors blend seamlessly with the outdoors then the landscaping plays a major part of the whole home's success. The wow factor outside has been created by the green and white colour scheme with two magnificent old olive trees framing the entrance to the villa. These are matched by the six tall Washingtonia Palm trees framing the outdoor entertaining area and another mature olive tree which is offset by a stunning feature wall behind clad in quartzite wall paneling. The expertise of the TerraVerde team helped Soha and Javier recreate their dream of a sunken majlis area and outdoor kitchen while the tigerwood decking used around the pool is a great contrast of colour. The wave hammock sits suspended over the pool is brought to life by the Japanese ceramic mosaic tiling.

All told, it's been an eventful six months but after all of the hard work and inevitable frustrations, the end result is a welcoming home which this modest couple are happy to share with friends. Indeed Soha has already started to plan her next home. “I did a lot of research on design websites. I realised I had many more ideas than I had space.” We can't wait to see her next opus! ■



The outdoor sunken majlis was created by TerraVerde but brought to life by the mix of colourful cushions in shades of pistachio, burnt Sienna and white

## SOHA'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK

- For structural and design work:** Louis Wehbe (050) 3845338
- For contractors:** Matthew, Obaid Al Jassim LLC (050) 4548720
- For lighting solutions:** Prolight LLC (02) 6444361
- For outdoor misting system:** Greensense Environment solutions (050) 4760588
- For landscaping** TerraVerde LLC, (04) 3443228, terraverde.ae
- For project management:** Jon Leonard (050) 4285480
- For bathrooms:** Bagno design (04) 3381375
- For Royal Botania furniture:** Nakkash Gallery (04) 2826767
- For curtain/wallpaper design:** Private Label by Carla Sandral [www.carlasandral.com](http://www.carlasandral.com)
- For home AV solutions:** Halim Greiss at Archimedia (04)3370181
- For Ego Paris & Moroni pieces:** Atmosphere (050)5624007
- For upholstery:** Ibrahim at Feshwari Star (04) 3493003
- For Harlequin & Romo fabrics:** Feshwari (04) 3393559
- For Philip Jefferies wallpaper:** Goodrich LLC (04) 3493003
- For decorative hardware:** Professionals (02) 6334813
- For bioethanol towers and saltwater chlorination systems:** Estele and Pierre Gabet at Azur Systems (050)5482159